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HOW SHALL THE PENSION LIST BE REVISED?

BY REPRESENTATIVE R. P. C. WILSON, OF MISSOURI, CHAIRMAN
OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PENSIONS; GEN. S. S. BUR-
DETT, PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE GRAND ARMY
OF THE REPUBLIC, AND COL. W. C. CHURCH, EDITOR
OF THE "ARMY AND NAVY JOURNAL."

HON. R. P. C. WILSON:

THAT the condition of the nation's finances is such as to imperatively demand a material reduction of expenditures or a largely increased revenue to avoid an actual deficit in the Treasury is conceded on all sides, and the sentiment of the country seems unmistakably to point towards a more economical policy in the appropriation of the public money, rather than to increased taxation to maintain the present high rate of governmental disbursements.

The necessities of the situation seem, therefore, to require a close scrutiny of every item of expense, with a view to reduction wherever the same can be accomplished without injury to the public service or a failure to recognize the just obligations of the Government.

The pension roll, representing, as it does, by far the greatest item in the nation's annual bill of expenses, and bearing a large number of names which have no legal or moral right to be there, is just now drawing an important share of the public attention as a promising field for retrenchment and reform. The question as to how the pension list can be revised so as to remove therefrom the fraudulent and undeserving, and at the same time work no injury to the worthy veteran, is a serious and perplexing one, and many who have given the subject much careful thought find it difficult of solution.

My observation leads me to believe that the operations of the Act of June 27, 1890, have a great deal to do with producing the prevailing sentiment against the vast and ever-growing pension

list, and it is to a change in the present construction of that Act that I look for a probable remedy for some of the evils complained of. The report of the Commissioner of Pensions for the fiscal year 1892 shows that on June 30, 1892, 293,068 invalid pensions had been allowed under the Act above named, and many thousands of names have been added to the roll since that date. The Act provides among other things that "all persons who served ninety days or more in the military or naval service of the United States during the War of the Rebellion, and who have been honorably discharged therefrom, and who are now or may hereafter be suffering from a mental or physical disability of a permanent character, not the result of their own vicious habits, which incapacitates them from the performance of manual labor in such a degree as to *render them unable to earn a support*, shall . . . be placed upon the list of invalid pensioners of the United States, and be entitled to receive a pension not exceeding \$12 per month, and not less than \$6 per month, proportioned to the degree of disability to earn a support." The words "in such a degree as to be unable to earn a support" should, it is contended (and apparently with much reason), have been held to mean that the applicant shall be wholly incapacitated by mental or physical disability from obtaining a livelihood, in order to secure the maximum rating of \$12 per month, and that the lesser ratings under the Act (\$6, \$8 and \$10 per month) should of course be allowed for proportionate disabilities.

Under the present construction of this law there is no discrimination, within the limits of the rates named, between the allowances for disabilities shown to have originated in the service and line of duty, and the allowances for those which were incurred long after the close of the war. Thousands of pensioners now on the list receive the highest rating allowed by the Act under discussion without being wholly (or totally) disabled; on the contrary, they are able to and do continue in the regular pursuit of their chosen avocations and earn for themselves and families an adequate and comfortable support.

Should the view above referred to as to the proper construction of the Act prevail, it is believed that the result would be to strike from the list the names of many beneficiaries who did not render the service or suffer the disabilities necessary to give a just title to the bounty of the Government, and the saving to the

public treasury by such a construction would no doubt be very large.

A return to biennial medical examinations suggests itself as another practical way of separating some of the goats from the sheep. Prior to June 21, 1879, those invalid pensioners whose disabilities were not of a permanent character or unchanging in degree were, every two years, subjected by law to a careful medical examination to determine their title to continuance on the roll, but by an Act passed on June 21, 1879, these biennial examinations were abolished, and there is now no adequate way by which a pensioner's partial or complete recovery can become known to the Government unless he invites a medical examination by filing an application for an increase of pension, and this a pensioner who knows his disabilities no longer exist is not likely to do. The remedy for this lies with the Congress, but if anything is done to revive the biennial examinations careful account should be taken of the probable large increase in the appropriations for examining-surgeons' fees caused thereby. It may be stated in this connection that the applicants and pensioners themselves formerly paid the fees of the examining surgeons, but now the Government pays them, and I am not an advocate of a return to the original method.

Regulations should be adopted by the Pension Bureau by which favoritism and personal bias in the reports of examinations by the Government's physicians will be prevented, and to this end the suggestions to the House Committee on Appropriations made at the present session by the Medical Referee of the Pension Bureau that the Bureau be represented in examinations throughout the country by competent physicians detailed from the Washington office may, upon close examination, be found to be worthy of trial.

Many pensions are now drawn and rated on the findings and recommendations of examining-boards made up of the family physicians and personal and political friends of the persons examined. The certificates of medical examination are not held to be confidential by the Pension Bureau, but are easy of access to the pensioners and their representatives, and the examining surgeons know this.

All cases of reported fraud should be promptly investigated by the Department through the medium of the force of special ex-

aminers in the field, but in no instance should a pensioner's name be dropped from the roll on any ground until he has been allowed the widest latitude to show his right to a continuance of his pension.

The proposition has been advanced that a commission be appointed to go over the allowed claims now in the files of the Pension Office, but in the light of the enormous number of such cases (876,068 on June 30, 1892, with many thousands allowed since then), and of the fact that they represent the labors of a great bureau for thirty or more years, I fear that such a commission would have to be unwieldy in its proportions and expensive in operation to accomplish any results, and even then it is doubtful whether more than a superficial skimming over would be the outcome. Aside from the claims allowed under the law of June 27, 1890, which of course would be affected by the change of construction heretofore suggested, it would, to my mind, be utterly impracticable to attempt a wholesale readjudication of these admitted cases.

There can be no doubt that the deserving soldier who went unflinchingly to the front at his country's call, and while enduring the hardships of camp, march, and conflict incurred wounds or other permanent disabilities, regards the pension list as a roll of honor, and earnestly desires, with all other good citizens, the adoption of such measures by Congress, or by those charged with the administration of the laws, as will purge the list of all those who have been placed thereon through fraud or misrepresentation; but the undeserving class, which, unfortunately, constitutes a considerable proportion of the list, will never relinquish the benefits wrongfully acquired without a bitter and determined struggle, and many well-meaning and conscientious men in public life, who acknowledge and earnestly deplore the existence of pension abuses, will hesitate to align themselves on the side of corrective measures for fear of a possible adverse effect upon their political fortunes. I contend, therefore, that the administration of the pension laws should, if possible, be completely divorced from politics, and while I have not yet been able to fully satisfy my mind as to the practicability of the change, it may be found, upon careful consideration and investigation, that the transfer of the bureau to the War Department, proposed in a recently offered (but not adopted)

amendment to the Pension Appropriation Bill, and to the care of a courageous, able, and fair-minded army officer, would be a step in the right direction.

The demand that the pension list be maintained in its ideal status as a roll of honor is not a partisan one, but voices the sentiment of the conservative and enlightened people of the country without regard to party affiliations.

These views as to the best methods of accomplishing a just revision of the pension list are confessedly tentative and of so general a character that they may be of but little value in pointing out the proper road to be followed, but I desire to urge that, whatever may be done, no violent or vindictive hand should be laid on the roll. The matter should be approached in a just, dispassionate, and liberal spirit, and no pains should be spared to preserve inviolate the rights of every worthy veteran. The country would deprecate any vicious attack on the pension roll, and any party that advocates such a course will meet with the just condemnation of the people.

To the men whose sufferings and sacrifices led to the preservation of the Union the country owes a debt of gratitude which can never be fully repaid, and I earnestly urge that no backward step be taken by the Government in the material recognition of that great obligation. From the war of the Revolution down to the present time it has been the policy of our lawmakers to treat our soldiers liberally, and there should be no departure from that policy now.

R. P. C. WILSON.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BURDETT:

THE body of our pension laws and the present methods of their administration are the outgrowth of the sense of justice which plainly demands that permanent impairment of capacity to earn a livelihood resulting from service should be, in some measure, compensated by a money payment from the common treasury; of the sentiment of gratitude towards those who in the behalf of all who remained loyal assumed in the field the burden of the common defence; of the engagements and promises which rival parties and politicians seeking the soldier vote thought it necessary to enter upon to secure party or personal success; and of the efforts of the veteran beneficiaries themselves, made

through individual exertion or the agency of their organized associations.

Whatever of praise or blame may be due to these several agencies considered separately, it is undeniable that the result reached by their joint influence is the cause of much present criticism and of some alarm.

The sums required to satisfy the allowed claims are very great, pending applications are many, and the field from which they may yet be gathered is far from exhausted. How considerable a factor the pension list has come to be is just now more sensibly appreciated than ever before. A new party has come into power, pledged to a revolution in financial and industrial legislation and policies. It can take no step towards the accomplishment of its purposes that will not first and chiefly demand consideration of the sums necessary to be raised for pension payments. The necessities of that service may prevent or delay the fulfilment of beneficial purposes entertained by that party, and they will be sure to be held to answer for the non-fulfilment of promises, not wisely given perhaps, but which the voters nevertheless expect to be redeemed.

The present dissatisfaction is therefore likely to continue and may tend to diminish the honorable regard in which the living and the dead of the great struggle have thus far been held by the masses of their countrymen. The stage of denunciation has been reached. It is chiefly directed against the veteran beneficiaries. That which is most virulent is the utterance of the class who believe that the war for the Union was wrong; that which is greatest in volume falls from those who go no further than to read the totals of the annual appropriations, but fail to recall that the foundations were laid in a struggle which itself was vast in its every agency, and especially in the hosts who marched to battle.

Four years of offensive war, which rallied two and a half millions of men to the colors of but one of the combatants, meant resulting obligations in due proportion. Unfortunately for the veteran, the levy made for his benefit is a present burden, the service by which he earned his dole is but a memory. The events of thirty years ago are in these rushing times coming to be counted as among the antiquities.

The courses of thought which have controlled the veterans of

the late war on the general subject of pensions may best be gathered from an analysis of the proceedings of their organized societies. The greatest of these, and the most truly representative, is the Grand Army of the Republic. It was instituted in 1866, and has held its encampments each succeeding year. It has a present membership of half a million comrades. The first action looking towards influencing legislation was taken at the eighth annual session held in 1874, when a resolution was adopted urging Congressional action "for increased pensions to wounded and disabled soldiers and sailors, and especially to those totally disabled."

Seven years afterwards, at the annual session in 1881, attention was called by resolution to the great delay in the settlement of pension claims, and a committee was appointed to inquire into the subject. That committee, in its report to the next encampment (1882), recited the fact that it was the first accredited representative of the order which had ever "come directly in contact with the law-making power." Its work had been to persuade Congress to increase the clerical force employed in the adjustment of pension claims. From that time forward a pension committee charged with the duty of caring for veteran interests has been regularly appointed by each succeeding encampment.

From the reports of these committees, and the action taken thereon, it may be stated that the later energies of the organization have been mainly exercised in obtaining such an enlargement of the old law as would add to the pension list "all honorably-discharged soldiers and sailors, actually disabled, without requiring proof that the disability arose in the line of duty during service; the widows of all honorably-discharged veterans, and an increase of pensions allowed to minor children."

The passage of the Act of June 27, 1890, commonly called the disability bill, which dealt with these purposes, was largely aided by the pension committee. It may be confidently stated that the Grand Army, in large majority, holds to the justice of this act. It should, however, be noted that a considerable minority within the ranks of the organization refuse their consent to the departure thus taken from the old ground of limiting pensionable disabilities to such as occurred during the service. This minority has vehemently opposed the endorsement of projects

looking to the enactment of a service pension law which would at once add every living veteran to the rolls, an honorable discharge being the sole test of the right to be there.

Some of the grounds of objection have been that, whilst grants of public money for injuries received when prosecuting the nation's business of war were part of the contract of enlistment, payments on other grounds, especially on that of service rendered or disabilities subsequently contracted, are, at best, a gratuity, and very like a charity. The moral right to so dispose of the public funds was questioned. The immense burdens such a policy would impose were perceived, and it was feared that the glorious name of the Volunteers might fade under the imputation of mercenary motives.

The progress of thought and purpose in the Grand Army on pension subjects is interesting.

The early gatherings were composed of men fresh from the field who were yet comparatively young and strong. They were proud of their service. They sought no pecuniary reward. The charitable features of their organization had in view the assistance one comrade could give another. It was eight years before it occurred to them to intervene between the government and their disabled comrades, and then only in aid of the most seriously injured, and in line with the government's original contract. The next step arose out of their just concern for the prompt settlement of pending applications. It was not until the tremendous inroads caused by the strain of war began to manifest themselves by the premature decrepitude of many of their comrades, and the common poor-houses began to know their presence, that the Grand Army took up the question of securing pensions for those disabled and needy veterans who could not trace their ailments back to the very period of service. The purpose was to provide for such as these, and within the limits of that purpose the popular heart has willingly given its consent.

The Act of June 27, 1890, was addressed to this end, but, while it reached and relieved the distressed, it gave like advantage to all qualified applicants without regard to the state of their fortunes who could show themselves "to be suffering from a mental or physical disability of a permanent character . . . which incapacitates them from the performance of manual labor in such a degree as to render them unable to earn a support."

The omission of limitations confining the benefits of the Act to needy applicants only was, in part, the result of the persistent fight which the veterans kept up against any enactment requiring a declaration of poverty as a condition precedent to the grant of a pension, and of the purpose on the part of many to make the law as nearly as might be an approach towards a service pension Act. There is little reason to expect that the situation growing out of this Act will be changed. The people will be slow to insist on the official classification of any of their defenders as paupers. Legislators will take note of this along with the fact that a million old-soldier voters are personally or sentimentally interested in the question, and there is the further fact always to be appealed to that service pensions have been given to the survivors of all our wars. The Act of January 29, 1887, puts upon the rolls at eight dollars a month every surviving officer and enlisted man who served in the war with Mexico and who reaches the age of sixty-two years. The Congress which has just adjourned increased the allowance to twelve dollars per month.

No such discrimination against the men who fought for the preservation of the Union as would result from the repeal or serious modification of the Act of 1890 is possible, while the Mexican and other service pension laws remain in force.

The outcry against the laws is not so great in volume or nearly so vehement in form as is that against the method and result of their administration. It is insisted in many quarters that the rolls are encumbered by names not lawfully entitled to be there. If this is true, it is indeed an outrage which calls for prompt correction. But the very vehemence, excess, and even rudeness, of some of the assailants give warning that their charges ought not to be admitted in any measure until investigation has been had. If matters are as bad as they are asserted to be, there have been worse than mistake and mismanagement; there have been fraud and conspiracy. That all the probabilities are against this is indicated by the dearth of facts which the most hostile have been able to produce. Nevertheless iteration and reiteration have had their effect upon the popular mind. There ought to be searching inquiry through dispassionate (not partisan) agencies. The great body of veteran survivors will welcome this.

In the meantime the situation might as well be faced. Relief to the taxpayer is to come from the scythe of the great reaper.

The beneficiaries are old men now. If not by the actual count of years, they are yet old because of the exposures and decrepitudes which come from their service. All but one of the great leaders in battle are dead; a division of their followers joins them every year. A little patience and the account will be closed.

S. S. BURDETT.

COLONEL CHURCH:

TO DECIDE as to how our pension list should be revised is to determine one of the most difficult problems that can vex legislation. The question is fortunately one free from partisan suggestion. To neither of our great political parties belongs the exclusive credit of generosity towards old soldiers, and upon neither can be charged the sole responsibility for what may be considered unwise liberality. In the closing hours of the last Congress two distinguished Democratic Senators, Mr. Palmer, of Illinois, and Mr. Gorman, of Maryland, united in the declaration "that there seems to be a rivalry in both the great political parties to see how far they can go in the matter of pension legislation." President Cleveland in 1887 signed one of the most liberal pension bills we have ever had, the one granting a pension to all survivors of the Mexican War who had served sixty days in Mexico or en route thereto. It was thirty-nine years after the close of this war when a service pension was granted to these men who secured for us our great southwestern territory, with its enormous store of mineral wealth. Such recognition of service was withheld from the soldiers of the Revolution for fifty-nine years, and from the survivors of 1812 for fifty-seven years. In accordance with these precedents it should be granted to the survivors of our last war somewhere between 1904 and 1922.

We need not be embarrassed in revising our pension list by consideration for any public sentiment in opposition to it among the "duty soldiers" of the War. That old soldier Andrew Jackson declared in a message to Congress, recommending a careful scrutiny into the circumstances and claims of every person drawing a pension, "the honest veteran has nothing to fear from such a scrutiny, while the fraudulent claimant will be detected and the public treasury relieved to an amount far greater than has heretofore been suspected." A veteran of our last war, Major-General O. O. Howard, whose empty sleeve bears testimony

to the reality of his service, quotes with approval the declaration of a Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, in New York City, that "as much real patriotism may be displayed by refraining in times of peace from inflicting unnecessary burdens on the country as by coming to her defense in time of war;" and the further declaration that "any soldier who applies for, or accepts a pension that he does not justly deserve for disability incurred, or receives as a reward for service when he is too old to labor, is guilty of conduct likely to injure the men who were and are willing, without any reward beyond the approval of their own consciences and that honorable fame which is dear to every patriot, to give their blood and their lives for their country." General Howard is undoubtedly correct in his statement that this declaration embodies the common sentiment of living soldiers.

The men who served faithfully from a sentiment of patriotic devotion are unwilling to accept the theory that military service is necessarily demoralizing, or destructive to health, or that—the casualties of war apart—it diminishes a man's ability to compete with his fellows in the struggle for existence.

Who is there among those who served honestly in either of our great armies, North or South, who does not find occasion every day to thank God for the lessons he learned in the army? Call the roll of the survivors of our great war and from each community would respond the men who are there held in the highest respect, not only as good citizens, but as leaders in every undertaking that demands ability of the highest order. They have held and still hold the chief places in our cabinets, in the administration of public affairs, National and State. They sit upon the bench; they manage great industrial enterprises, and the country owes its progress in every department, during the years since the war, to them more than to any single class in the community. Their history illustrates the truth, too little heeded in this country, that one of the best of all trainings for the actual business of life is that obtained in military service. As self-respecting men they are opposed to any legislation which tends to make such service synonymous with pauperism. They ask only that the country shall redeem its promise to provide for those whose services have actually incapacitated them from providing for themselves and their families, that it may be saved from the dishonor of permitting Belisarius to beg his daily bread. They

recognize the generous spirit in which this demand has been responded to, and they are ready to do their part to save the country from the abuse of its bounty.

In considering then the difficult subject of revising our pension list, it is well to have it understood at the outset that much that we suffer from the unwise bestowal of pensions results from that disregard of military ideas and military methods which is chronic in this country. It is a fundamental maxim with the army that a distinction should be made between those who loyally accept the restraints of discipline, and those who for any cause seek to shirk them. The two cardinal sins in the military calendar are malingering and desertion. The man who indulges in them, and thus puts a double burden of responsibility and danger upon his fellows, deprives himself of all claim to consideration.

Congress in its legislation has shown itself unwilling to be guided by the military sentiment that condemns these vices—a sentiment as old as war—as essential to the formation of the character of the true soldier as chastity is to the preservation of true womanhood. Our law makers in their large bounty have ignored the distinction between the duty soldier and the “coffee-cooler,”—the man who lingers in the rear to take his comfort or to escape hardship and risk. It has given undue weight to what is known as a “hospital record,” ignoring the very grave question as to whether it is really bound to provide to the end of time for those who burdened the muster rolls with their incapacity, and who are largely responsible for our enormous military expenditures during 1861–5, amounting in the closing year of the war to an annual outlay of one thousand millions of dollars.

Is it not time that we should recognize the fact that our methods of conducting war in disregard of sound military principles are unnecessarily wasteful, and that we are bearing the burdens of our mistakes in a pension list now numbering a total of 876,068, and making rapid progress to a grand aggregate exceeding a million, if it does not reach the twelve hundred thousand figure predicted for it? We still have on the rolls twenty widows and two daughters of the Revolution, the last two survivors of that war having died in 1869, aged, respectively, 105 and 109. There are 165 survivors and 6,657 widows of the war of 1812, and 15,215 survivors and 7,282 widows of the Mexican

War. This leaves 687,862 survivors and 158,893 dependent relatives of the War of the Rebellion, with 426,398 claimants for pensions for this and earlier wars on the list for consideration at the date of the last report, October 12, 1892, besides 361,663 claimants for increase of pensions.

In the five States of Washington, Oregon, Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas there are now nearly three times as many pensioners as there were soldiers furnished by these States to the War, viz.: 72,960 pensioners to 26,286 soldiers. This is due, of course, to the movement of population to the West, but it is a striking illustration of the extent of our pension roll. There are 38,330 pensioners in the ten States that formed the Southern Confederacy, and 108,436 in the six States that held to a divided allegiance, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. In all 146,766 in the old slave States. The banner State on the pension record, Ohio, has 93,386 pensioners, Pennsylvania has 85,370, New York following with 77,920, Indiana with 65,120, Illinois with 63,230, Michigan with 42,258, and Wisconsin with 26,382. The annual payment to pensioners, excluding arrears of pension, amounted last year to \$116,877,-867.24, and it will probably soon reach a round one hundred and fifty millions. Including arrears, it will probably exceed for a time an average of two hundred millions annually.

It is much easier to show, from the statement of such facts as these, that our pension list should be carefully revised, to the end that it may be made a roll of honor, than it is to suggest feasible methods of revision. One thing seems possible, and that is to so codify our pension laws as to make them intelligible and consistent. Under their present interpretation there are, or were at the date of the last detailed report, no less than one hundred and nineteen grades of pay between the extremes of one dollar a month and seventy-two dollars a month, with three other grades of \$100, \$166.66 $\frac{2}{3}$, and \$466.66 $\frac{2}{3}$ a month, supplied by special Acts to a few exceptional cases. The advance from the lowest to the highest rate is by fractions of a dollar, the average advance being sixty cents.

Another reform that has been suggested is to permit the employment of trained actuaries to determine the exact extent of the burden upon the public treasury. What this is no one now knows, and for a succession of years the Commissioner of Pensions

has been obliged to guess at it, as nearly as he could, and to ask Congress later on to make good the deficiency occasioned by his insufficient estimate.

We know the general fact that the pension outlay thus far in our history has amounted to a round billion and a half, a total which need not alarm us when we remember that this only equals our present amount of expenditure for eighteen months, and that we have, since the close of the War of the Rebellion, paid nearly two billions upon the principal of the public debt, besides twenty-six hundred thousand in interest and premiums.

General Egbert L. Viele has suggested, as the result of his experience in Congress, that the Government should employ competent persons to receive the statements of those who think they are entitled to pensions, and to embody these statements in the proper forms of applications. "A bureau especially charged with this duty, under an officer of the Adjutant-General's department, would certainly act as a barrier against fraudulent claims, would save to the Government many times its cost, while saving to the soldiers all the expense now exacted by the claim agent."

Finally, and most important of all, Congress should provide for printing a list of pensioners, with a statement of the reason for granting a pension in each case. To this should be added a list of those applying for pensions whose cases are pending, including the claimants for increase of pensions. Such a list should be widely distributed, instead of being confined, as was the one printed some years ago, to a few copies passing at once into the hands of persons interested in suppressing the facts. Every army officer should receive copies, and every organization representing old soldiers, and it should be sent to each post-office to be posted there. The attempts made thus far to revise our pension rolls have not paid their cost. The two or three hundred special examiners employed last year succeeded in convicting only one hundred and twenty two fraudulent pensioners or fourteen-one-hundred-thousandths (.00014) of one per cent. of the whole number of pensioners. To prove that a pension has been wrongly bestowed requires the establishment of a negative proposition, and this in the face of the testimony of honest but possibly mistaken witnesses who are to be accused of no worse sin than the desire to help a neighbor or friend or possibly an old comrade to establish an exact relation between the disability he suffers to-day and the

hardships he endured a generation ago. What man, dealing ever so honestly with himself, can tell to which of his early experiences are due the physical infirmities he suffers from in the decline of life? And as a gift blindeth the judgment, so does the prospect of support or of partial support at the public expense confuse the memory of past experiences.

While endeavoring to set forth fairly the exact condition of the pension problem, I must confess that I have no great sympathy with the present disposition to criticise our appropriations for pensions. We are reaping what we have sown, and in the end we may learn that the money expended in preventing war or in preparing ourselves to conduct it with efficiency is quite as wisely bestowed as that devoted to paying later on for our neglect, and we may find comfort for ourselves in the fact that our expenditures for pensions at the worst showing will not, after the arrears of pensions are settled, exceed the amount contributed annually to the public treasury by the tax upon liquors and cigars. We may be content with the knowledge that it is the vices of our people that are providing for the comfort of our old soldiers, not one of whom should fail to receive what is honestly his due in the way of public support, and let those who object to contributing to this refrain from smoking and drinking. Our liberality toward veterans is in the line of our increase of national expenditure in a ratio beyond that of an increase of population. In 1821 this increase was six millions in excess of this ratio, and in 1870 \$164,400,000 in excess. Pensions are not peculiar to the American service; for example, every British soldier receives one after an enlistment of twenty-one years, and a temporary or permanent pension after twelve years if discharged as an invalid or rendered unfit for service.

We give pensions for a service of sixty days and even for one of fourteen days; our pensions are much more liberal and our pensioners much more numerous. That is all the difference. We overlook the distinction between civilians in uniform and soldiers, and put upon the same footing the "bounty-jumper" and the man whose loyal devotion to duty takes no thought of personal advantage.

There is in this country a military class, too little understood and too little esteemed by the general public. It furnishes a type as distinct as the religious, the artistic, the literary, the

scientific, or any of the other types that contribute to a complete nationality. In this class have been found some of the noblest examples of American manhood. Their deeds are indelibly associated with the episodes in our history which have given to our somewhat commonplace pursuit of the nineteenth century ideals of material advancement, whatever character of heroism it has. An association of thirty years with these men has given me an unusual opportunity to form a judgment as to their opinions. I feel entirely confident that they will heartily respond to what is said here as to indiscriminate pension legislation. There is a certain delicacy in their position towards those who are accepted as representing the military class, and it is not their province to initiate any movement that might be interpreted as a jealous interference with the rights of others. But it may be considered as certain that they will be found heartily in sympathy with whatever tends to elevate the soldierly character in public esteem, or to save it from the reproaches brought upon it by those who, without sufficient warrant, assume to represent it in the demand for indiscriminate pensioning for war service.

WILLIAM CONANT CHURCH.